

Saint Thomas the Apostle Board of Education Minutes

December 12, 2024 (6:00pm to 7:30pm)

Opening Prayer - Fr. Jim

Pastor Report -

Recognized how blessed we are as a Parish to have the support of so many who stepped up to meet the ECC fundraising goal in such a short timeframe and thanked the ECC fundraising committee for their efforts.

Encouraged the Board to keep the Strategic Plan on the forefront, to review it regularly in meetings, and to utilize it as a guide for areas of importance to focus on into the future.

Noted the upcoming decrease in state funding (~\$100k) which will impact the Parish operating budget, and encouraged the Board to be vigilant about the change.

Mission Moment -

Pat Kalahar, principal at Holy Spirit, spoke of the success the school has had in practicing excellence in foundational skills. Staying focused on a clear and focused set of priorities and reducing the number of changes and initiatives the teachers and staff are asked to focus on.

Visitor Concerns - No visitors in attendance

MAP testing overview -

Reviewed comparison spreadsheet provided in the packet. Ryan noted the teaching staff were coached on the importance of the test as a tool to reflect student growth and believes the growth scores reflect their focus on this aspect this school year.

Discussion regarding how to interpret the results given our dedication to inclusion which results in children in the same classroom receiving a variety of educational supports (ESS, Math/ELA stratified groups, etc). Question raised regarding the possibility of breaking out the results based on cohorts to evaluate if growth is concentrated in any subset of the student body. No decision made to take this action but may be considered for future evaluation.

2025-2026 Tuition Plan overview -

Ryan reviewed the proposed tuition increases, with a review of the new amounts with neighboring schools. The proposed increases ranged from 5-6.5%, with the highest per student increase for families with 2 students (+\$286.00 per year per student). St Thomas remains below the 2024-25 Grand Rapids average tuition for families with 3 or 4 children, however, Carla and Ryan noted the choice not to raise those levels higher for 2025-26 given the small impact this change would have due to the small number of families in this category. Concern raised that the tuition for a 2 student family may already be a strain for many families and that the planned increase may cause additional financial strain. Ryan noted the availability of the Tuition Angel funds for families in need.

Quarterly Outreach -

Calls placed slightly later than normal due to a focus on the auction. Most have completed their calls but if help is needed, others are willing to place calls. Feedback reviewed and no surprises, with concerns noted coming from families school administration is already aware of and involved with.

Partner Organization Reports

Education Foundation (Betsy Edgerton)

- Strategic plan completed
- Auction participation was strong
- First January speaker series scheduled for Tuesday, 1/28/25 with "TeamAgar" giving their inspiring story and message.

Home and School (Genevieve Boyle)

- Teacher dinner during conferences was appreciated by teachers and staff
- Cookie trays delivery 12/6 and appreciated by teachers and staff
- All parent parties are done except 1st grade which will be done in the Fall.
- Help for room parent communication being done now by Melissa Krolewski which has been a big help.
- Stock the Lounge is shifting to monetary donations which will go towards larger Costco trips vs individual family donations.
- Starting to plan for Catholic Schools Week
- Looking into a volunteer tracking program with Anthony Giovannetti

Boosters

- ECC tie dye shirts went well.
- Rumble with the Rams event in January in process
- Euchre tournament being planned for February
- Booking the golf course for next year's outing
- Working to get others involved in Boosters.
- League fees will be billing 3rd and 4th graders next week.

Marketing Refresh (David)

- Continuing to solidify a consistent message of branding/logo for St. Thomas education and Parish. Many elements were cleaned up to create a more structured and formal mark. Traditional/Scholarly Look
- Father Jim has final approval on the logo.
- Signiish for ECC

Committee Reports

Finance (Carla Grant/Mark-virtual)

- Carla gave clarification that in two years, state funding in the annual amount of \$100,000 will expire and the finance committee is working to identify the closure of this future gap.
- Auction proceeds exceeded the goal, so a committee met to determine where to allocate the additional funds. It was voted for the \$40,000 excess to be allocated to Early Childhood Center operations.

- Budget summary sent - no questions from Board members. Written report noted the focus on evaluating expenses based on tuition increase impact.
- A \$100,000 security donation was made for the school, and this will be allocated to hiring a staff member focused on security, as well as renovating the school entry to enhance the process of visitors and students entering the building.

Building and Grounds (Coleman Baar)

- Heavy focus on ECC project.
- Evaluating entryway renovation options.

Marketing (David)

- Refer to the written report and refresh above.

Policy & Planning (Molly Kennedy)

- No Updates

Mission Effectiveness (James Wilson)

- Quiet fall for the committee
- Witness speaker series that began in September will continue into the spring with 3 speakers. Future speakers' suggestions are welcome.
- Diocesan speaker series schedule set and invitations beginning. Waiting on update on grant from the West MI Catholic Foundation to determine scope of the series.
- Patron Saints project may be renewed after Christmas. Waiting to gauge faculty interest

Committee on Directors (Meredith Maczka)

- Ashley Emmerson interested in becoming an at-large School Board member.
- Ken Fortier identified Boosters as the best fit for him at this time. Interested in helping with Golf Fore Sports.

Development and Outreach (Betsy Edgerton)

- Family Bash was a success
- All IN week upcoming in 2025
- Catholic Schools Week upcoming
- Preschool/Kindergarten Round UP! 1/29/25 at 9a and 6p

Marketing and Communications (David Shankin)

- Saint Thomas visual identity has been reviewed by the parish team.
 - Revisions have been requested, made, and resubmitted.
 - Still waiting on final approval for requested revisions.
- Exterior signage for the ECC building has been requested and is in progress utilizing the new visual system.

Principal's Report (Ryan Corcoran)

- ECC update - great progress, cost/time savings due to a positive finding when walls opened up.
- Enrollment - 3 families left in early fall, but aligned with budget enrollment projections as we began year above target.
- Director of Safety and Security - 14 applications, interviews to start next week
- Accreditation - evaluation coming in spring 2026 by the MI Non-public School Accrediting Association (MNSAA). Time required for gathering and uploading evidence of meeting the standards.

Previous Meeting Minutes Approval

- No November Meeting (Diocesan Summit)

Concluding Prayer

Attendance

14 Voting Directors:

Chair, Brian Hillary: Present

Vice Chair, Elissa Williams: Present

Secretary, Jake Smith: *Absent*

Building and Grounds Committee chair, Coleman Baar: Present

Finance and Fiscal Development Committee chair, Mark Fjelsted: Present/virtual

Marketing Committee chair, David Shankin: Present

Mission Effectiveness Committee chair, James Wilson: Present

Policy & Planning Committee chair: Molly Kennedy: *Absent*

Board of Directors Committee chair: Meredith Maczka: Present

At Large Member, Michelle Anderson: Present

At Large Member, Jamie McCabe: *Absent*

At Large Member, Mary Vonk: *Absent*

Ex Officio Members and/or guests

Pastor, Fr. Jim: Present

Principal, Ryan Corcoran: Present

Jermiah Sluggett, Present

Development & Outreach chair, Betsy Edgerton: Present

Financial, Carla Grant: Present

Home and School, Genevieve Boyle: Present

Boosters: Ashley Emmerson: Present

Visiting, none